

Prayers and Pitfalls

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Prayers and Pitfalls

by [DaisukeKazamatsuri](#)

Summary

Bruno always thought he was a Beta. His family all thought he was a Beta. So imagine his surprise when, hidden away in Casita's walls, Bruno goes into heat.

On Camilo's 14th birthday.

Guilty and praying to a God who's never answered, Bruno finds himself mated to his young nephew...and it may turn out to have been Fate all along.

Notes

I've sat on this story since mid-January. It's been through 2 beta's. I finally started on chapter 4 as I'm posting this, but updates will still be slow to give me time to write ahead. I might later include notes about my personal Omegaverse headcanons for clarity, but I have the main parts explained as best as I can manage.

One note, though: I do avoid using the word "vagina", and that is for my own comfort. If you want to read my writing as that being what Omegas have, feel free, but I won't be using the word directly here and may even avoid using genital-specific terms for parts of Bruno in sex scenes. If it's too confusing, I might change it, but it's mostly for my own comfort.

Anyway, enjoy my newest recruitment to Hell!

If you saw this posted without a summary: No You Didn't.

Chapter 1: Unanswered Prayers

Chapter Summary

Bruno has been hiding in the walls for 9 years, but something about the scent coming off of Camilo on the boy's 14th birthday has him feeling kind of...funny.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Bruno always saw himself as a harbinger of bad luck.

His visions seemed to bring nothing but grief, fear, and anger. His attempts to work towards better outcomes always came out wrong or got dismissed for the negative aspects. He seemed to break everything, and even his room seemed to tell him the best place for him to be was just *far away from la familia*.

Growing up, his sisters had been the bright lamps to help guide him through the pitfalls that Bruno kept finding himself falling into.

So, when the three of them turned sixteen, Bruno was entirely unsurprised that his sisters presented as Alphas. What was surprising was his lack of a presentation. His mami kept insisting that Bruno was just a late bloomer, that he'd present soon and they'd find him a good mate to make the family stronger.

So Bruno awaited his presentation with bated breath and mixed feelings, but even after he turned twenty, the oldest they'd ever seen someone present, he was without a secondary gender. Marked as a Beta, Bruno found himself falling to the wayside more as Pepa and Julieta courted and mated.

He didn't really mind. It left him free to focus on his Gift more in an attempt to improve the kinds of visions he received, spending more time up in his tower as the years dragged on.

Julieta's mate Augustin got pregnant first, followed shortly by Pepa's mate Felix, and soon there were two beautiful baby girls for the family to dote on. Bruno adored them, often telling them grand stories about far away lands and dramatically flailing to keep them calm when they got fussy. The two were joined by baby Luisa two years later. The three little girls were such bright little stars, their shining faces quickly becoming the highlight of Bruno's days.

Isabella turned five, her eyes sparkling at the dazzling image of flowers surrounding an older version of herself, the wide open space of her room full of topiaries and flowers and blank areas for her to grow new things. Bruno smiled, glad the creative little girl would have so much freedom to move and explore her gift. His smile dimmed a little as Alma started immediately talking about how useful Isabella's Gift was.

Dolores wasn't too far behind Isabella, and Bruno flinched at the Gift she received, silently praying to whichever God would listen to allow Dolores peace at least once in a great while. He knew, however, that his feelings were futile. Alma had already stepped in to ensure that.

Trying to assuage his own fears, Bruno gave each girl a vision. Hoping to see only good futures, Bruno could not bring himself to lie to either of them when they turned out to be less than ideal. Yet he withheld some of what he saw.

Because Dolores would be miserable as it was, and he could not tell her how agonizing the days leading up to the proposal would be.

And Isabella didn't need to know how much would have to break before she could truly let herself go and explore the true potential of her powers.

So Bruno helped Isabella and Dolores hone and understand their powers, carrying Luisa with them so she could be included, and then came tiny Mirabel and Camilo, hardly a few months apart from each other. Luisa helped Bruno look after them, the tiny four-year-old only really able to make silly faces and keep them entertained, but it helped nonetheless. Bruno was unsurprised when, a year later, Luisa's Gift was revealed and she was immediately tasked with carrying whatever needed to be moved.

Casita was now full of the sound of tiny feet, pitter-pattering around during all hours of the day, squeals and joyous cries of playing children echoing her halls.

That was when the first real pangs of frustration and sorrow hit Bruno.

Because, now past the prime age of 35, Bruno was still without a mate. He didn't begrudge his sisters anything, adored all of his little *sobrinas* and *sobrino* to death, but part of him had still always wanted a family of his own. As a Beta in the *Familia* Madrigal, Bruno would never get that chance. Not now. So he focused all of his attention on being a good *Tío* for his sisters' children, any moment spared between working for the village and having visions was spent playing with the kids, helping the older ones practice their new powers, watching them grow.

Camilo's door revealed itself, and Bruno could already feel the draw towards the little boy growing as the seer understood exactly what kind of fallout it would mean. He vowed to himself to make sure that the little ball of sunshine never forgot who he was, underneath all of the transformations. Camilo would need at least one person to remind him that he was loved just as himself.

And then—

And then, and then—

Bruno watched in horror, with the rest of the family, as Mirabel's door disappeared.

He hated that Alma felt the need to beg him for a vision, felt that the only way to understand was to look to a future that could contain anything at all, and that Bruno knew would only be seen in its worst form, regardless of what he actually saw. But he did it anyway. Watched in

deepening dread as the magic and the home they had built was cracked apart at the seams, only the figure of an older Mirabel standing before it, even as the cracks shifted between ‘there’ and ‘not there’.

Grimacing, knowing that it would be taken in the worst way and cause only grief for the youngest shining star of their family, he threw the tablet to the ground, shattering it. He let *Casita* guide him quietly to a safe place within her walls, looking back only once, and fled from the crushing weight of the expectations he’d been burdened with for thirty five years.

At age forty, Bruno fled from his family to the space beyond the magical house’s reach, and while Dolores would hear him there, it was as if he’d slipped out of the family entirely. And it would remain that way for nine years.

Because, despite Bruno’s ideas of himself as being a harbinger of bad luck, it wasn’t until Camilo’s fourteenth birthday that his luck would actually run dry.

The celebration had gone on all day, the house rumbling with the excited sounds of half the village piled into the walls and yard, and Bruno had had to tuck himself away in his room just to avoid some of the stronger sounds and smells of the party. It was a little odd, actually, because the smells of the food and other people had never really bothered Bruno before, but for some reason it was *really* getting to him this year.

He was feeling mildly nauseous from all the mingling scents, his head a little warm from the overstimulation of his senses, and he had to give little pets to a few of his rats as they fretted over him. Thankfully, the party was cut a little short to spare poor three year old Antonio from the crowds, and the family ended the night with dinner and cake at the table.

Bruno struggled his way upright to watch through the crack, his fever spiking a little at the movement, softly wishing his oldest *sobrino* a happy birthday.

When the family retreated to their rooms, Bruno threw his hood over his brow, chanting to himself as Ernando, grabbing a bucket of spackle to repair the latest crack that had appeared beyond Camilo’s room. As he crossed the threshold of his room’s doorway, a cramp wracked through his abdomen, ripping a gasp from between his lips and causing his footing to stumble for a brief moment. That was a new feeling, but Bruno knew he needed to get the crack patched tonight or it could get bigger.

He took a few deep breaths, forcing the heat pooling in his gut and behind his brow out of his mind. Took a small running start to skip across the few unbroken floorboards over the gap, bucket swinging at his side in a manner that was deliberate now, adding to his momentum. Every jump caused a new throb of heat and pain to rip upwards from his hips along his spine, but his task was too important to ignore.

Finally, Bruno settled in the space next to Camilo’s room and got to work. Spreading the spackle with his hood up wasn’t always the easiest thing to do, forcing him to lean back extra far to see the cracks beyond the edges of the fabric, but he was used to it now, nine years into his isolation.

What he wasn't used to was the strangely enticing scent wafting into his nostrils and triggering yet another throb in his body, this time more heat than pain. Citrus, sharp and sweet, its strength deepened as if it was being cooked over the stove, tinged with an almost alcoholic burn — Bruno dropped the bucket and putty knife to the floor, clutching at his abdomen as the heat and pain became nearly unbearable.

Sweat dripping down his face, his eyes unfocused and his mind fuzzy beneath the heat, Bruno nearly missed the heavy thud of something large hitting the wall behind him from the other side. The scent intensified, feeling like a call as Bruno struggled to remain upright. He felt something in his body answer the call, a whine escaping his throat as something wet and slick started to drip from between his thighs. His senses picked up the edges of a nostalgic but unfamiliar scent, warm and sweet and flowery, coming from much closer than the citrus scent that was overwhelming his mind. Some part of his brain registered the second scent as his own, though his consciousness had no way of knowing how he could tell that.

Forgetting for just a moment exactly how perilous his position was, Bruno let out a keening whine to the source of the citrus scent, calling out in desperate want for the owner of the scent to come closer.

Another thud and a curse, and Bruno's body started to move to the end of the hallway, past Dolores' room and just in sight of the porthole hidden by the painting. The slow movements were tracked and followed by the citrus scent that Bruno's hindbrain was categorizing as 'Alpha', and soon the painting was being pulled open, revealing said Alpha to Bruno.

Camilo.

Shock kick-started Bruno's brain into gear again, the haze of desperate arousal and pain lifting to make way for panic and fear. Family. The family couldn't know. He couldn't let them.

Heart thundering, blood flowing like fire in his veins, Bruno tore off down the hallway, navigating in the darkness like it was his only solace. Heavy footsteps rolled and drummed behind him, hot on his tail and gaining despite Bruno's advantageous familiarity with their surroundings. Down the makeshift steps and through the twists and turns, Bruno heard Camilo stumble only once over the discarded putty knife, the distance closing as they approached the gap with the missing floorboards.

Bruno took a practiced leap, foot stretched forward in preparation to spring along the gap as he'd done a thousand times before. Then there was a sudden addition of weight along his back, and when his foot landed, they instead crashed into the gap in the foundation. The floorboards had cracked, broken, and fallen with them into a space beneath, Bruno laid out face down beneath the full weight of a fourteen year old Alpha.

This close, Camilo's scent washed over Bruno with extra tinges of excitement, arousal, and satisfaction. It snuffed out all of Bruno's panic and fear beneath a fresh wave of heat, arousal, and desperation.

His mind was wavering, he was clinging desperately to sanity, his body calling out to this potential mate that had just *caught him*, but his mind simply repeating a mantra: *'don't fuck*

your nephew, don't fuck your nephew, don't fuck your—'

Camilo took a deep inhale at the crook of Bruno's neck, "Mmmm, why do you smell so *good?*"

Bruno felt the whining moan bubble up from his chest and *tried* to stop it, *tried* to keep this from going too far and to tell Camilo who he was so that they could stop and talk and—

Camilo suckled on a spot on Bruno's neck and the noise came out with a gasp that left Bruno completely breathless. Instinct must have taken over somehow, because the next thing Bruno knew Camilo had pulled both their pants down to mid-thigh, propped Bruno up on his hands and knees, and was behind him on his knees, swiping the tip of his very hard, very hot, very *tempting* dick against the edges of skin that Bruno was sure he didn't remember opening into anything before.

"Camilo, wait—" Bruno rasped, but too late. Camilo had already started to push into the relatively newly developed opening that marked Bruno, officially, as an Omega presenting in his late forties.

The breach was tight, Bruno feeling barely big enough to take even his *sobrino's* still developing dick, but the slick that had begun dripping down his bare thighs fulfilled its purpose, making the first desperate thrust smooth. Not painless, though—the stretch hurt and left Bruno aching to his very core.

Camilo didn't give him any time to recover, however, as he began thrusting hard and fast into the heavenly passage, his scent spiking with the success of their union and practically making Bruno drunk off of it in the process. Muscles Bruno didn't recognize squeezed and flexed, pulling gasps and moans from his forceful partner, and the newly presenting Omega was helpless to the feeling, eyes rolling as he felt filled for the first time.

"Camilo, Camilo, Cami, *Cami*—" Each thrust punched out a breathless call of his nephew's name, his orgasm approaching like an oncoming truck, but hovering just out of reach.

Camilo bent down once more, face buried against Bruno's neck, just a little higher than his scent gland, and bit down *hard*.

Bruno shouted and spilled against the ground, his passage clenching rhythmically around Camilo's dick and barely forming knot, coming and milking the young Alpha as Bruno's vision went white.

Camilo thrust a few more times before following, spilling into his uncle and tying them together with his brand new knot and Bruno's brand new opening. The feeling of seed flooding him triggered Bruno's second orgasm, his hips twitching and tugging at the tie, causing Camilo to collapse onto Bruno's back, letting the older man see glazed eyes and a dopey grin.

Bruno is equally buzzed, his blood singing and his voice practically purring as he babbles incoherently. That was by far the best orgasm of his life, brought on by his newly presented

nephew. He's sure he looks like a fucked-out mess, but he doesn't realize quite how spaced out he is until Camilo's voice jars him from his post-orgasm bliss.

"So," Cami is still panting from the exertion, his knot still inflated as he spurts small streaks into Bruno, "what do I call you, besides *hermoso*?"

Bruno felt some of his blood rush back to his face at the endearment, stammering out his answer, "B-Bruno."

"Bruno?!" The shock causes the young man to straighten too fast and too high, hitting his head on one of the wooden beams stuck halfway up the gap that had still been above them as they fucked.

"*Santa Maria, sobrino*, are you okay?!" Bruno exclaimed, unable to stand due to their positions but attempting to twist in concern nonetheless.

"*Sobrino?!?*" Camilo's breath is coming in short gasps now, and Bruno worries that he'll hyperventilate at this rate.

"Cami, calm down, please. I don't know what happened, exactly, but I need you not to panic or I'll panic and then we'll wake the house up, and then—" At some point Bruno had transitioned into a ramble, clearly distraught but unable to let himself deal with it while his nephew was having his own crisis.

An instinctive tug from Camilo, as if to escape the situation, rides his still inflated knot against a hidden nerve in Bruno that has the Omega gasping and seeing stars, his dick weakly spilling another small wave of seed onto the floor. Camilo groans at the clenching muscles around his knot, his panic abating slightly under the incredible force of teenage libido.

The moment of clarity subsists, though, as Cami takes another look at Bruno. Bruno tilts his head to see Camilo over his shoulder, opposite the side Camilo had bitten, his eyes heavy with lust and his mouth open as he pants. The heat is present and bearable at the moment, but Bruno knows that that's largely due to their attachment, and he has to take advantage of that if he wants to have any kind of conversation with Cami before things go too far—

Well, they've already gone too far, but Bruno knows only too well, from seeing far too many private moments in his prophecies, that Camilo at least managed to miss mating Bruno. It was close, but it was absolutely pure luck that kept it that way. Bruno swallowed, "turn me around. I want to look at you while we talk, and I can't move by myself right now."

Camilo hurries to comply, leaning back and carefully spinning Bruno around on his dick, removing Bruno's pants and shifting the long, muscled legs so they straddled Camilo's hips and Bruno's backside rested on Camilo's folded thighs. Once they were re-situated, Bruno placed his hands on Camilo's cheeks, pulling the boy down some so they could talk without Bruno being reminded too much of their current position.

"*Ay, sobrino*, look at you. You've grown into such a fine young man." Bruno's smile was gentle and loving, his gaze practically doting as he took in his sister's first son without the barrier of a wall. Camilo's face turned a bright red, but Bruno knew he had to say something

before anything else happened. “No one has ever presented this young, so I know you haven’t gotten the full set of talks about what this all means, but just know that whatever happens tonight, you are not to blame for it. I’m not sure why I presented on the same night you did, either, but I can feel myself losing to a temptation I shouldn’t be having. If, after you leave, you regret this? I will know, and I will do everything in my power to keep you from having to deal with me ever again.” Bruno felt the pinprick of tears on the edges of his face, spreading like cracks in his expression along his crow’s feet. “I am so sorry, *sobrino*. If I’d had any idea, I’d have made sure I was far away from here.”

Camilo was staring down at Bruno with an expression that Bruno could not read. Brown eyes roamed in jerky movements over his uncle’s face, his nose flaring as Bruno felt his heat spike, his pupils wide as he continued to stare. “*Tío Bruno*.” The name was whispered like a prayer, and Bruno knew that, as guilty as he felt for feeling this way, he would do anything to hear it said that way again.

This was his *nephew*, for crying out loud, but Bruno still felt the connection between them, the *rightness* of Camilo’s scent surrounding him, like a Madrigal door built for the two of them. The romantic corner of his mind, often occupied with the telenovellas that Bruno made up to pass the time, tickled at long-forgotten stories of True Mates. Of couples whose souls were so compatible that they could trigger each other’s cycles on first contact. Of Alphas who presented late because their Omegas were born younger. Mates who were so intricately woven together that any distance made them feel sick.

As much as Bruno wanted that, wanted to be someone’s late-blooming True Mate, to belong to someone like Camilo, full of sunshine and able to dissipate the darkest of clouds, he also didn’t want Camilo to be stuck with an old curse like him. Especially when a union between them would get Camilo kicked out of the family entirely.

“*Tío Bruno*,” Camilo paused, his breathing becoming heavy again as his knot finally died down. Yet Bruno could feel his dick, still hard as a rock, and smelled the return of overwhelming arousal on the air, the alcoholic tinge strengthening under the sweet orange-lemon citrus. “I’m not sure what’s going on, but *Dios Mio*, there’s something about you that’s got me—” a groan cut Camilo off, his hips thrusting, the squelching sound of Bruno’s slick escaping from the freshly-un-knotted entrance echoing through their little space.

Bruno groaned and tilted his head back, his arms falling behind him to keep him propped up by the elbows. With his face released, Camilo nuzzled back into the space he’d bitten before, hips jerking and twitching as their minds fogged over together.

In a show of strength, Camilo tilted Bruno’s hips up, spread his knees, and plowed himself downwards into the passage that was sliding around his thrusting dick. Bruno barely held back a scream as the nerve from earlier got brutally fucked, his dick twitching and dribbling as he descended into dry orgasms, his body overheated and practically burning, his muscles clenching and relaxing in turns as Camilo chased a second orgasm.

“*Tío, Tío, please—*” Camilo was hovering, nose buried in Bruno’s neck, hips stuttering even as he failed to reach a peak. Bruno, unsure of exactly what Camilo needed yet yearning to help in any way he could, leaned forward and buried his own nose into Camilo’s neck.

They rubbed at each other, scenting each other, marveling at the intense scent of orange-chocolate-um that arose from their mixing, and Camilo shouted as he thrust a few more times, his teeth reflexively sinking into Bruno's shoulder again as he came, knotting the older man once more.

But this time, he didn't miss the mating gland. Bruno saw stars. His whole world opened up as the feeling of half of a mating bond clicked into place, like a puzzle piece that had gotten lost being snugly fit back where it belonged. His teeth itched to return the bite, to complete the bond, but he resisted. He refused to trap Camilo into that when he had so much time to explore, to be a kid, to find a real Mate. His refusal was so intense that Bruno didn't realize his eyes had lit up, a bright emerald glow washing over the pit.

Dust kicked up around them, Camilo shielding his eyes from the sudden brightness and the swirling debris, so neither of them really saw what the sand formed into. Bruno saw flashes of things—more encounters in the space between the walls, a few instances of them sitting in a room together, just chatting, but not enough to focus on making a tablet.

Bruno hiccuped as his body finally calmed, the dust settling and his eyes returning to normal, Camilo blinking in the returning darkness, eyes clearer than even during their brief pause before. Tied together again, Bruno could do little more than collapse backwards on the rough foundation of the house, feeling dazed and overwhelmed, somewhat panicked, and more whole than he had felt since his sisters presented at age sixteen—33 years ago. His teeth itched to complete the bond that was filling his chest with warmth, but Bruno found his self-restraint to somehow be stronger than even the call of a Mating Bond, at least for now.

Their heavy breathing echoed in the hollowed-out foundation of the wall, mixed with occasional hitches as Camilo grinded his knot into Bruno in tiny movements, his orgasm continuing as his first knot really settled itself into his body. Bruno was thankful for the shortness of first heats, his body also settling as it prepared to change itself in an extremely late second puberty. He wasn't sure what he would do if he was stuck in a full multi-day heat until he could sneak out to find an Alpha, so at least for that he was grateful for Camilo's presence.

As the twitching died down, Camilo blinked slowly above his uncle. The exhaustion of the day, his presentation as Alpha, and the revelation of Bruno catching up to him all at once. Bruno could see the struggle, could sense the whirlwind of emotion radiating off of Camilo even as sleep tried to take over, and simply put a hand to his nephew's cheek. "Sleep, *sobrino*, It's alright."

Given some kind of external permission, Camilo dropped off and collapsed onto Bruno's chest, arms wrapping around Bruno's thin torso as he snuggled into the comforting scent of chocolate laced with oranges.

Bruno sighed and wrapped his arms protectively around Camilo's shoulders, cradling the teen to his chest as he waited for Camilo's knot to die down. It took a little longer than the first time, but once Bruno was able to slip off of the teen's cock, he pulled the boy's pants back up and gently laid Camilo down to go retrieve his own pants and underwear.

Clothed and with his mind back to full clarity, Bruno looked down to his sleeping nephew with regret, guilt, and sorrow. Gently, he picked the boy back up, arranged him to piggy back over Bruno's shoulders, and climbed back out of the hole they'd landed in. As quietly as possible, and with *Casita's* help once he'd gotten out from within her walls, the seer snuck Camilo back into his room, the lights already dimmed and the mirrors dormant, and deposited the boy upon his bed.

Bruno stood staring at Camilo sleeping for a few extra moments, his hand coming up to rub at the throbbing mating mark on his shoulder. Bruno instinctively inhaled the scent of the room around him, an orange-sunshine mix that was quickly being overlaid with the chocolate-orange-alcohol mixture wafting off of both of them. Bruno flinched at the realization, unsure of how much of his scent would have already been sensed by his family before his presentation.

He should leave.

Camilo's chest rose and fell in calm sleep, a sigh escaping the boy as he wiggled softly against his pillow.

He needed to leave.

Bruno leaned over the boy, his face hovering just over Camilo's forehead, a hand brushing hair out of his nephew's face. Camilo turned his face toward Bruno in his slumber, and Bruno's lips connected with Camilo's own instead of kissing the forehead like Bruno had intended.

He had to leave.

The kiss was brief, as Bruno had gasped and pulled away immediately, but the softness of it stuck in his brain as his legs finally got the memo.

He left.

Disappearing into the walls once more, he paused only long enough to pick up the discarded spackle and putty knife, the crack across from Camilo's wall would have to be patched another day.

Bruno, deep inside the bowels of the home that had both sheltered and neglected him, curled up on his bed and cried himself to sleep in his first Post-Heat Drop. His hand clenched his one-sided mating mark, throbbing with the influx of information being broadcast from Camilo, and he prayed that the next two weeks would be painless and easy.

Like all of Bruno's prayers, it would remain unanswered.

Camilo absolutely got entranced by Bruno's scent and walked into his bedroom wall face-first.

Chapter 2: Ankle Deep

Chapter Summary

Bruno struggles to keep himself sane, but it's becoming a losing battle.

Chapter Notes

New tags: Good Parents Felix Madrigal and Pepa Madrigal, Guilty Bruno Madrigal, Touch-Starved Bruno Madrigal, Mind-break, Bruno Madrigal as Jorge

So, warning for more angst and the beginning of psychosis. I tried to keep it relatively non-triggery, but there is a moment of severe internal struggle that results in a mental break. Please be careful with your mental health. This should be the worst of the chapters of this kind, as any further chapters with this level of angst will be from Camilo's point of view. That said, the angst is only just beginning.

Note about a term I used last chapter that didn't get addressed: Post-Heat Drop is a direct renaming of what is called "Sub Drop", and is something that happens after an extreme emotional high. It's not exclusive to BDSM or to Subs, it's just more commonly identified in those situations. No, this is not something that Bruno should be experiencing alone, but he's being stubborn right now.

There's a section in here written by my amazing friend Xi who has both inspired and encouraged me throughout this journey. They have acted as my hype man at every turn, and been an amazing smut beta along the way. I love you, bro.

It's tough to pick just one, but honestly this chapter contains one of my favorite sex scenes I have ever written.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

An unreciprocated bond mark was more common than a lot of folks were taught. Often, in the throes of passion, one partner would bite the other and leave a mating mark that the other didn't care to connect with. Some people wore special collars to protect their scent glands from such things, but nature did have a way of ensuring an incomplete bond wasn't a life sentence for the recipient.

Specifically, the bite would fade. Given enough time, if the marked partner didn't complete the bond, then their mark and the connection that came with it would simply disappear and leave them open to new partners again. This could take anywhere from a day to two weeks.

It was an extremely painful waiting period.

Incomplete or not, the mark still worked like a mating bond: it received the emotional and physical status of the partner, often intrusive in its delivery of foreign emotions in particular. It also pushed the marked partner towards completing the bond as soon and as strongly as possible.

The itch crept in gradually. Unnoticeable in comparison to the intrusive emotions that streamed into Bruno's consciousness on a regular basis. Bouts of cheer, anger, sadness, arousal—even spikes of stress—wedged themselves into Bruno's brain at random times of day, interrupting his self-narrated telenovellas and filling his wall-patching time with sharp headaches.

It was the fourth day after their encounter that Bruno felt his instincts really trigger: attempting to lash back at the influx, Bruno felt the true limitations of an incomplete bond. His senses attempted to reach out, speeding along the connection, only to slam into the isolated walls of his consciousness.

For the first time, Bruno realized how isolated he had truly become. Stuck like a doll in a bell jar, able to see out, to hear his surroundings, yet not interact in return.

What was worse was that the ringing, the cadence, the ever present chime of the bell was lovely. Bruno knew Camilo, of course. He had been there at every stage of his life so far, albeit from a distance, so he knew every observable fact about him. He knew the way he sat at the table, slumped comfortably until one of his aunts came to straighten him up. He knew the foods he took from the kitchen when he believed no one else was there to see and chastise him. He knew the sound of his steps apart from the rest of their family's from the slight scuff of his heel alone, but now...

Now Camilo was all around him. His emotions entered Bruno's head of their own volition, and Bruno had known Camilo all his life but now he *felt him*. It was the difference between seeing the candy spin up from feathers, brightly colored and lighter than air, and tasting the sugar dissolve on his tongue; it was so sweet, so delicious, so delicate and all encompassing that it colored every other taste in his mouth even after it was gone.

Bruno was alone in his mind but Camilo was there anyway, soaking every thought like a mirage, and Bruno was horrified that it was a comfort.

The influx continued.

Now that Bruno had attempted to lash out once, had attempted to stem the flow of incoming emotions, it was as if it had become a new reflex. Every time it felt like Camilo's emotions were too much, Bruno felt his mark throb sharply in an attempt to communicate, only to slam into the side of the bell jar once more. A week and a half after the heat, Bruno was left with constant headaches and hot flashes, scrambling to masturbate as Camilo's teenage hormones surged through his blood stream.

Two weeks in, and Bruno was starting to wonder if the mark would fade at all.

He could feel his body adapting, his new entrance widening and occasionally dripping slick onto his cot when he awoke from his now-frequent wet dreams. Could feel his chest burn as it gained a thin, plush layer that was tender beneath his fingers. Bruno was intellectually aware that he was experiencing mock-heats as his body went through a rapid, if late, second puberty. They felt, in the moment, like full heats—leaving Bruno writhing in bed, humping the cot with his legs spread wide, begging and pleading under his breath for Camilo to return.

They would pass in the matter of an hour, leaving Bruno swearing at himself in guilt and shame.

At this point, Bruno could feel his mouth working every other minute against the air, attempting to bite a partner that wasn't present. His instincts were practically singing a siren's call into his ears, tempting him to crack the glass of his isolation and push the thread of connection through the gap.

He bit down on his tongue to avoid the thoughts. They stayed.

Two and a half weeks after the mark was made, and Bruno was now fully panicking that it hadn't even sort of faded yet.

He heard Camilo getting the final set of talks from Pepa and Felix around that time, and Camilo's voice floated through the wall with a question that surprised Bruno.

"*Mami*? How can you tell if you have a True Mate?"

Bruno held his breath, awaiting the answer himself. He could tell Pepa was frowning when she responded.

"Camilo, I've told you, True Mates aren't real. It's all romanticized nonsense."

"But *Mami*, if they were? How would you know?"

A deep sigh and a vague rumble of thunder sounded, "well, if I remember correctly, the biggest things were the strength of the connection and the ease with which the pair's scents crossed. Something about their first crossing being permanent? And I think there was something about an incomplete mark not fading even after a super long time."

A gasp, "But wouldn't they go mad? I've seen some of the marked in the village who didn't finish the bond, they're all feral and animal until it fades, right?"

"Yes, *mijo*, an incomplete bond tries to convince you to complete it at any cost. It's a mercy the longest one anyone's ever seen lasted only two weeks. Imagine if it lasted forever!"

Felix's voice piped up, "I once saw a man who had gotten marked again right after an old one faded. He'd been under the influence of the bite for three weeks when they finally strapped him down and knocked him out so he could have some peace and let the mark fade."

"What?! That's so crazy. What was he like before they did that?" Camilo's voice was curious, but Bruno felt a spike of stress and worry over the bond, his own response deafening him long enough to miss the response.

But he'd heard just enough to cast concern on his own situation. It had been more than two weeks, hadn't it? He didn't *feel* crazy, but he certainly felt compelled to chase Camilo down for a completed bond.

The scent of chocolate oranges skimmed along his nose, and Bruno sighed, relaxing into it. As long as he could keep his impulses at bay until the mark faded, everything would be fine.

Another week later, Bruno found himself sticking by Camilo's room more and more often, anxious any time he was away from it even just to retrieve food or relieve himself. He got lucky on his last trip to the bathroom for a shower, as Camilo had been the last one to use it and the Alpha's scent was *everywhere*. It kept his panic at bay long enough to wash himself and sneak back into the walls before anyone realized someone was in the bathroom.

But Bruno was getting concerned with his own behavior. As he approached the end of the fourth week since his presentation, he found himself unable to do much more than press his forehead against the wall of Camilo's room and inhale the scent wafting from it.

Chocolate oranges.

One night, as Camilo entered his room sighing and beginning to strip for bed, clearly back from a long day helping the village, Bruno caught a dangerously familiar note to the scent. Rum.

The smell had Bruno flushed and whimpering almost immediately, like a dam on his arousal had burst and left him unable to stop the flood. In the back of his mind, he felt Camilo's answering spike of arousal intruding on his oncoming heat—for that was what it was—and a sharp gasp escaped him.

"*Oh.*" Camilo's voice filtered through the wall, much closer than Bruno expected. A silence followed for several moments, Bruno attempting to gather himself enough to push away from the wall. To prevent himself from triggering Camilo's rut and landing them right back where they'd started. "*Oh, Tio.*"

Camilo's scent moved along the wall, practically dragging Bruno along with it as he chased that burning scent of alcohol, moving away as it circled Dolores' room to the painting. They stayed there for a moment, nothing but the false door between them, as Bruno felt his mind teeter between fogging over and clarifying under the terrifying prospect of what they were about to do.

And then Camilo opened the painting.

One strong inhale and Bruno mentally buckled, turning to flee into the walls once more. There was no fear in the running, though Bruno's heart pounded as his thoughts spun in circles, only a beating arousal as he felt himself chased down by his Alpha, a pressing in of spun sugar on Bruno's consciousness. The chase was merry, leisurely, and Bruno practically *leapt* into the pit, bracing for Camilo's tackle as he did so.

Bruno was too far gone to even put up a token protest as Camilo knocked him down and stripped them both of their pants and underwear. He was soaked, slick practically pouring

down his thighs as Camilo aimed himself and practically launched at Bruno's entrance, grinding against the slick cavern in search of penetration.

The contact was *heavenly*. Though the fog of the heat had settled into his mind, the constant, cloying feeling of the incomplete bond faded. As if simply touching sated some part of the bond, Bruno found himself arching into Camilo, searching for more skin-to-skin contact. Like an animal, he ripped off his ruana and shirt, throwing them into the corner of the gap, and attempted to reach up and yank off Camilo's own ruana from over their shoulders.

He couldn't see his Alpha, but he felt shifting and saw the bright yellow garment crumple in the corner shortly after. Another wave of arousal swept over Bruno and he had to brace himself against the floor with his hands, leaving Camilo to strip his own shirt and line himself up to enter Bruno. An inhale, the heavy scent of orange rum laced with chocolate filled his nose, and in the next moment the fog was so thick in Bruno's mind that it felt as if Camilo had a thousand hands, all touching him at once like the points of a thousand stars.

Bruno relaxed into his Alpha's actions, partially contented by the fact he was surrounded by Camilo's scent and skin. If he weren't panting so hard, grinding so readily against the hardened dick shifting against his hole, Bruno was sure he'd be purring.

His vision swam, the dark stone and bamboo interiors of the house walls wavering as his hole clenched on open air, whining and calling, "Alpha, Cami, *please!*" Camilo's hands practically burned as they trailed along Bruno's sides, causing the flesh to jump and shake as the trembling got more intense. He was sure that his Alpha's handprints would be tattooed on his hips come the morning. His skin felt too tight, too hot, but everywhere they touched it was like the heat was released in a steaming geyser of sensations.

A feeling like pins and needles struck Bruno's hand, causing it to clench as Camilo slipped into him like they were made to fit each other. The slight stretch was a delicious burn, moulding him to Camilo's shape, every ridge and crevasse etching itself into Bruno's body as Camilo thrust with the intensity of a desperate man.

Pins and needles again.

Bruno had to refocus on his vision, try and see just what was happening to his hand in the near-pitch-black darkness, but when he did, he realized his hand was wet. The pins and needles were the feeling of water hitting his hand amplified tenfold under the influence of his heat.

Huh. That shouldn't be there. The water didn't run along this area, so—

Another drop, but this time Bruno felt it fall before it hit his hand. *Oh*. He's drooling. Well, that explains it, then.

No longer concerned, Bruno's eyes rolled upward as Camilo changed angles and sped up, his speed nearly break-neck and being matched by Bruno's own hips in response. Waves of intense, all-consuming pleasure swept over him from his hole outward, traveling along his hips, back, shoulders, limbs, and tingling in his fingers and toes. Camilo's thrusts were

starting to slow down at points, starting to catch on the knot that was *definitely* bigger than it had been last time, crushing itself along all of the most delicious nerves in Bruno's tunnel.

"Please, please, please, *pleasepleaseplease*—" Bruno wasn't even sure what he was begging for, but he was desperate. Whatever it was, he needed it, and he needed it *now*.

Camilo gasped in his ear, "Yes *Tío*, ohh, yes, yes—" Camilo's knot popped inside Bruno, expanding and holding them together, and as the boy spilled into his *Tío*, tying them, Bruno realized he'd been begging for exactly that.

His orgasm hit *hard*, Bruno tightening around Camilo's knot in tandem with the strong streams of cum shooting from his own cock onto the floor. Each clench both milked another wave from Camilo and a fresh spark of pleasure in Bruno, leaving them both unable to breathe as their entire bodies sang out in the ultimate ecstasy.

Finally, Camilo collapsed onto Bruno's back, energy spent, though the knot remained inflated inside of him. Bruno trembled under Camilo's weight, the last spurt of his cum dribbling out onto the floor, as clarity slammed into him.

A sharp inhale of breath resounded in the echoey space, the older Madrigal's eyes widening as tears began to swim before his vision.

He did it again.

"God, please, *lo siento*, Camilo, Pedro, God, forgive me. What have I done, what have I done, *what have I done?*" Bruno sobbed, his elbows shifting to prop themselves on the ground, his hands covering his face as the tears began to flow. The itch in his teeth was quelled, his heat silenced, leaving Bruno alone with the crushing guilt.

A shift along his back startled a fresh, chest-jerking sob out of the man, "*Tío?* What's wrong?" Camilo's voice was quiet, confused, concerned, and all Bruno could do was sob uncontrollably in response. Camilo leaned down and wrapped his arms around his uncle, his hips shifting to seat them comfortably against Bruno's, nuzzling the mating mark, "deep breaths, *Tío*, deep breaths."

Knowing what Camilo was doing didn't help with the root of the problem, but the gentle voice and shushing sounds seeped into his breathing patterns, calming the sobbing down to small hiccups. Camilo's soft lips brushed the mark and Bruno felt his inner Omega melt at the action, calmed and at peace in his Alpha's gentle presence. Yet Bruno's mind spun in circles, every moment that he hovered just beyond Camilo's wall replaying like an old episode of his telenovellas, begging for Bruno to reach out to the characters and tell them how to avoid the worst outcome, only to be reminded that he's observing a past event.

Even his ability to see the future never predicted this. The depth of Bruno's illness, of his sickness, his *evil*, was far more vast than Bruno realized. "Camilo. *God*, Camilo I'm so sorry. I should never have—"

Either Bruno's voice was too soft for Camilo to hear, or Camilo wasn't paying him any attention, because the boy interrupted with a musing tone, "It really hasn't faded."

“What?” Bruno’s shock cut through his thoughts, confused for a moment before he realized Camilo was still touching the mating mark.

“The mark I gave you hasn’t faded at all. Just like I thought.”

“*What?*” Bruno jerked, pulling on the knot and causing a sharp spike of pain to travel up his spine even as Camilo gasped and thrust once instinctively into him again.

Camilo had to take a moment to catch his breath before he could continue, “I don’t— I don’t know why I knew, but somehow I had this sense that my mark hadn’t faded. Like it’s never going to fade. But you never marked me back, *Tío*.”

God, Camilo was right. As Bruno turned his gaze to the scarred-over teeth marks on his shoulder, what little he could see at the angle his own head allowed, he realized they hadn’t healed beyond the initial scarring-over. That. That was unheard of.

“No, that can’t be. True Mates are just fiction. I can’t be— We can’t be— You can’t be tied down to me for your whole life, that—” Bruno’s vision was starting to blur at the edges, spots dancing in his gaze. “***What have I done?***” He has cursed another member of his family. Blotted out their future with his own terrible luck, his own disastrous misfortune.

His only solace was that he still hadn’t completed the bond.

Bruno knew, he *knew*, that the only reason he could understand this right now was because he had Camilo knotted inside him. The presence of the one who marked him, tied and between bouts of heat and rut hormones, quelled the instincts enough for Bruno’s mind to stay clear.

But when Camilo left, disengaged, Bruno would be back in that fog of madness again. And he needed to make sure that Camilo didn’t get dragged in with him, no matter what happened to Bruno as a result.

“Listen to me, Cami.”

Camilo, who had begun moving his hips a little again, milking his extended orgasm, lifted his head from Bruno’s shoulder, “Hm?”

“Right now, I’m thinking more clearly than I have in a while, so I need you to promise me that you’ll do what I say, even if I appear to change my mind.”

“*Tío?*”

“Promise me, Camilo.”

Camilo stuttered, his hips halting, “Y-yes, *Tío*. I promise.”

“Good.” Bruno sighed and lowered his head, resting it on folded arms against the floor, “When your rut passes, I want you to run back to your room. Once you do, I want you to stay away from me. No matter how much I try to tempt you, or how much my scent tries to call for you, you will stay away. I don’t want to hurt you. Do you understand?”

Camilo's breath caught, "B-Bruno?"

"You promised, Cami."

"B-b-b-but—"

"Please, Camilo. I can't hurt anyone else in this family again."

Camilo's voice wobbled, hitching his breath in the middle of his words, "Okay, *Tío*, I understand."

Bruno's smile was relieved, "Thank you, *sobrinio*." He leaned up, reaching his arm around to bring Camilo's head down over his shoulder—

And kissed Camilo on the forehead.

Camilo froze above him, and Bruno took a moment to search the caved-in floor around them. A bucket, a spackle knife, some nails, some broken floorboards, their discarded clothes... yeah, Bruno could use those. Working quickly, he reached for his ruana and flung it over his shoulders, scrambling for some nails and the putty knife. With the flat of the knife, he hammered the nails into some key edges of the ruana, forcing himself to remain in place. A few testing jerks ensured the security of the makeshift cage.

"*Tío*?" Camilo's voice shook, and his emotions were wildly fluctuating between terrified, worried, and depressed. Bruno had to ignore those, despite his strong instinct to comfort his *sobrinio*. Had to ignore how his own mood echoed Camilo's under the pressure of the oncoming Post-Heat Drop.

Finally, Bruno reached for the bucket—thankfully empty—and pulled it over his head like a helmet, taking a deep breath as Camilo's knot finally finished dying down and the boy shrank out of Bruno's hole. "Go, Camilo."

"But!"

"*GO!*" Bruno's shout reverberated from inside the helmet, startling Camilo into action. The step-step-scurf rhythm of the fading footsteps was the last real comfort Bruno felt as his afterglow faded and the itch crept back in.

Like a chilling rain filling a reservoir, Bruno felt the bonding madness crawl up from his toes to the roots of his hair, felt his scent change into a cloying, noxious thing as it called for his mate.

He felt himself fracture as his mind and his instincts battled one another in an attempt to stave off the loneliness.

Bruno felt every agonizing moment of the birth of Jorge, even as his mind stepped ankle-deep into the shallow end of the ocean of insanity.

Chapter End Notes

Bruno's not okay :')

Next chapter is more focused on lore and explanation than smut.

Chapter 3: The Yearning Bond

Chapter Summary

Camilo struggles to keep himself in check, and gets help from an unexpected source.

Chapter Notes

Welcome to the lore-building chapter! To be honest, I'm posting this now because I'd wanted to post on Tuesday and got distracted, but I'm not actually as far along in writing ahead as I'd like. Please take this as a peace offering and know that the next chapter is going to be Worth It when I can get ahead of the game again.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Camilo whimpered to himself, nose twitching as his body tossed and turned in his bed. It had only been three days since Bruno's second heat, and the newly developing layers to the man's scent were torturing Camilo at every turn.

Ever since his presentation, Camilo had been bombarded with the scents of his family at every turn. His parents' mixed scent of ozone and campfire smoke were both hair-raising and comforting at once, a reminder both of their protectiveness and their volatility. Antonio was still milk-scented, occasionally overlaid with the mint from his toothpaste or the scent of *Tía Julieta's arepas* from their most recent meals. Though it was also often mixed with Mirabel's not-quite-there scent of plums since they both still stayed in the nursery.

But despite all the new, intense smells clouding his senses, Camilo found he could always locate the dark chocolate scent underlaid with oranges that was Bruno moving about in the walls. The trouble was, lately it had a layer of something vaguely earthy, sweet, and sharply alcoholic that left Camilo feeling like his skin didn't quite fit right. He itched, ached, *twitched* to chase down that scent and hold it close until the sharpness died down.

It reminded Camilo of Bruno's heat scent, heavy notes of agave with the alcoholic burn flaring down his nose, but it was like the alcohol had soured and intensified. It was wrong, and Camilo was powerless to change it. Not without going directly against his promise. So Camilo tossed and turned, paced his room, found himself constantly distracted while trying to babysit the kids in the village, hardly slept, and all of it for nothing.

Some days, the scent became muted, but Bruno's scent was masked with a metallic undertone in its place that almost jarred Camilo in its strangeness. Those days, Camilo tracked Bruno as

he wandered around in the walls, stopping in places for long periods of time before patrolling through the rest of the house like a poltergeist.

Then a week had passed, and somewhere in the night Camilo had taken his pillow into the corner of the room, close to Bruno's scent on the other side of the wall. Comforted by the smell, Camilo fell back asleep sitting up, half of his pillow supporting his head as he leaned sideways against the wall and the other half hugged to his chest with a loose elbow draped over an upraised knee. When he awoke in the morning, he could hear Bruno faintly snoring through the wood, the sound deep and relaxed. Their closeness, separated as it was, was comforting to Camilo, relaxing the tension in his chest just that little bit. While Bruno slept, just inches away, his scent had relaxed back to just the chocolate-orange, and Camilo took deep, long inhales there for as long as he could allow himself.

When the Alpha stepped away, the sour scent seeped back in and Camilo could tell that Bruno was waking up. As the older man stalked away inside the walls, Camilo's heart ached. Despite the odd angle leaving his neck sore and his ass numb, it had been the best sleep Camilo had gotten all week. So it was unsurprising that he woke up that way every other day for the second week. And yet Bruno's scent got more and more sour, only returning to normal on those nights they slept barely inches apart.

The excitement of Camilo's presentation had died down just before the encounter, but Camilo wondered if his scent was sour as well. He noticed his family giving him concerned looks as his mind wandered to the events of that night, likely in response to the wave of fear and depression that followed each time he re-lived them. Bruno's scent was always strongest just behind the family tree, and Julieta had cornered Camilo at one point in concern.

"*Sobrino*, I'm just worried about you. If you're depressed, we can talk whenever you like, you don't have to sneak food all the time." Camilo didn't correct her, his worry over Bruno spiking at the realization that the sour scent was some kind of negative emotion.

"I'm fine, *Tía*, I promise. I'm just adjusting. Why?" Camilo was curious about what Julieta would say.

"Oh, well, I wasn't sure if it was actually you, but I've been smelling some sour tequila floating around the kitchen lately and couldn't find the bottle." The unspoken statement of Camilo's still new scent being largely unknown hung in the air.

Before she could press again, Camilo grinned and deflected, "I'm sure it just got shoved somewhere out of reach. Hopefully you find it soon." He beat a hasty retreat after that, but he knew he needed to talk to someone about this.

It couldn't keep going on this way, it was clearly affecting Bruno and Camilo felt the intense pull thrumming under his skin like the waves of rain in a hurricane. Bruno was his True Mate, there was no other explanation. The bite mark hadn't faded at all, and even though he wasn't supposed to be able to, Camilo could feel the edges of Bruno's consciousness prodding at his mind like a skittering alley rat. He needed Bruno to complete the bond, but the man was determined to never do that, and Camilo worried about what it was doing to his uncle's mind.

Of course, as unaware of Bruno's presence as the rest of the family was, Camilo knew there was at least one person who had to know. "Dolores," he whispered under his breath as he retreated to his room, "we need to talk."

He let his door close softly behind him, sitting down heavily on the edge of his mattress and awaiting the approach of his sister's lavender and baby's breath scent. It was distant at first—Camilo assumed she was in town for something—but she approached at a quick-yet-steady pace and entered his room with the quietest of knocks. She closed the door behind herself, but remained standing against it, her wide eyes taking in Camilo's slouched and no doubt haggard appearance.

"*Hermanito*, what's wrong?" Her quiet voice carried on the smallest whisper, her eyes unwavering in their gaze on him.

Camilo sighed and rubbed at his neck, letting his powers go and the dark circles reappear from beneath the transformation. "I can't take this anymore. I need advice."

Dolores rushed to him, reaching to hold him, and Camilo let himself fall into her embrace. "Of course, Camilo, just tell me what you need."

He took a deep breath, "It's about Bruno."

Her breath hitched, but she didn't speak, so Camilo assumed she already knew about Bruno's presence.

"Dolores, what do you know about True Mates? Not just the romanticized stuff, but like actual experiences. Has anyone encountered them in the Encanto?" Camilo knew his voice was unsteady, but he wasn't going to back out now.

Dolores frowned, but didn't immediately deny the idea. She was still kind of holding her breath, whimpering the way she did when she had heard something really big and wanted to tell him. Finally, she said, "I, well, *Señora* Guzman and her partner are True Mates, we could try asking them?"

"Wait, really?" Camilo felt shock enter his system. There really were other True Mates in the Encanto, and it was Isabella's boyfriend's grandmother? They were that close, and yet the whole rest of the family assumed the concept was a myth? "How soon could we pay them a visit?"

Dolores' eyes widened a little further and another whimpering squeak escaped her, "Tomorrow?"

Camilo slumped a little in relief, "Oh, good. I could really use a few pointers, I think. I, um," Camilo hesitated. He knew that his sister sometimes soundproofed her room at night, to escape the noises of the valley, but he had no idea if the nights of Bruno's heats had been during those occasions. "I, uh, kinda fucked *Tío* Bruno and—"

"Oh thank *God*." Dolores let out a relieved breath, slumping and nearly dramatically putting her hand up to her forehead.

“Thank God?!” Camilo exclaimed, flinching at nearly the same time as Dolores at his own volume. Then he laughed, causing Dolores to giggle, “Wow, *hermana*, I knew you had my back but that’s kinda extreme, don’t you think?”

Dolores kept giggling, struggling to speak between harsh breaths, “Sorry Cami, it’s just—” some more giggles, “I’ve been—” a long, harsh gasp of air, “holding that one in for—” a hiccup, “*weeks*.”

The siblings fell against each other, dissolving into a pile of giggling fits for several minutes as the stress of the situation finally let out some tension in each of them. Camilo had missed this, had missed just laughing with his sister over silly gossip. When had this stopped?

When their laughter finally died down, Camilo took a deep breath. He needed to have this talk, and properly, before he could sort anything out. “I think Bruno presented the same night I did.”

Dolores just looked at him, attentive in her listening, focused only on their conversation, and Camilo was grateful.

“The family always said he was a Beta, that he never seemed to present, or even give off any kind of unique scent. But that night, it was like we were calling to each other. The whole night I felt itchy and restless, and then when I *smelled* him. Dolores, it was like I’d come home. Like I could live with that scent surrounding me for the rest of my life and have nothing but happiness about it.” Camilo inhaled lightly, catching the sour-earth-chocolate-orange scent that was pacing back and forth behind the room a few doors down. “So I bit him. I fucked him and I *marked* him and it was *incredible*, but he didn’t mark me *back* and now it’s been over a *month* and my bite still hasn’t *faded* and I think it’s driving him mad but he won’t bite back and he *made me promise*—” Camilo’s breathing had sped up, tears gathering at the edges of his vision, sobs trapped in his chest as he poured his emotions out to his sister.

Normally, Camilo could read his sister like a book. He was good at reading emotions and she wasn’t shy about broadcasting her body language to him unless she was thinking about something personal. It was one of the reasons they were so close, their ability to read each other’s emotions so well. But as the shapeshifter looked up at his sister’s face in search of answers, he found her expression to be unreadable.

Not because she had closed off, as he might have expected, but because she was broadcasting *entirely too much* for him to separate anything out. Figuring she was sorting through something, Camilo hiccupped and held back his sobs, squinted to stop his tears, his chest aching and his face hot, his nose stuffed and yet still searching for Bruno’s scent through it all. He waited, his breathing stuttering and stopping as his sister stared back at him, concern now warring with the muddled soup of emotions she was wading through herself.

“I don’t know how to help you, Camilo.” The words were like the heavy drop of a gavel, each one loud in Camilo’s ears, but just as he took a deep breath in preparation to wail and cry into her shoulder, she continued, “But I think *Señora* Guzman may be able to.”

The wail came out as an aborted squeak—not that Camilo would ever admit that—and he practically choked through his tears to respond. “You do?”

Dolores appeared to take in Camilo’s appearance, her concern overwhelming everything else, and make a decision. “Yes, but we have to be *discreet* about this, Camilo. If anyone finds out who you’re talking about before we figure this out? I don’t want to know what Abuela will do.”

Camilo nodded emphatically, his tears drying and his chest relaxing, “Of course! Anything, Dolores. Whatever we need to do. Whatever I can do to make it up to you for asking this—”

Dolores made a quick side-swiping motion with her open palm, “Enough of that, Cami. Let’s figure out what’s happening and then we can figure out how much you owe me for this.”

Camilo simply tackled his sister in a tight embrace, sobbing and laughing and thanking her profusely as she just patted his head and gave a wry smile in return.

As it turned out, it was a few days before they had the chance to go into town together without someone else in the family following along. Finally, Mirabel was working on her embroidery with Antonio, Isabella was out on a date with Mariano, their mother was out watering the fields (they were wearing their raincoats as the downpour pushed everyone indoors), their *Tía* Julieta was in the kitchen preparing her next batch of healing food, and Luisa was off doing who-knew-what at the request of the village. So Camilo was mildly confused when Dolores dragged him up to the Guzmans’ home and knocked politely on the door.

Señora Guzman looked a little bewildered as well, but smiled and welcomed the pair inside. “Come in, come in, what can I do for you two?”

“*Hola, Señora*, we were hoping to ask you some questions about your bond with your Mate, if that's alright with you?” Dolores kept her polite expression on, and Camilo was struck, as he had been many times, with the scary ease his sister had with concealing information.

Señora Guzman lit up at the question, “Of course, my dears! Anything you would like to know, I’d be happy to answer.” She ushered them into her living room, seating the pair on a plush, floral-designed couch and herself on a similarly plush matching armchair across from them. “What would you dears like to know?”

Camilo looked to Dolores to see what she would ask, only to find her staring back at him, waiting for him to make the first move. He swallowed heavily, suddenly extremely nervous, and turned back to *Señora* Guzman, attempting to keep his eyes on her and not on his squirming hands between his knees. “I, um, I was wondering, what you could tell me about True Mates?”

The *Señora* raised an eyebrow, but smiled gently in return. “Ah, I did hear that you had recently presented, dear. I suppose it’s rare enough that your family might be giving you those old fairy tale versions, wouldn’t they?”

Camilo's eyes widened and his focus zeroed in on the older woman, fairy tale versions? So she knew about the real thing, then?

"Let's see. Well, I can tell you that they do exist. My Antonia and I can attest to that. Oh, discovering each other is such a joy. It's like finding a part of yourself you didn't know you were missing before that moment, like you were incomplete until the moment the bond settles into place."

"Really? It's that amazing?" Camilo couldn't help leaning forward, fully interested in anything the woman had to say.

She smiled indulgently, "*Sí*, it is. And sharing thoughts with your other half is one of the most useful things I've ever encountered."

"Wait, you share thoughts?" Dolores spoke up this time, clearly equally curious.

"Oh, yes. It's how Antonia and I knew for sure we were True Mates, since we marked each other at the same time." At the confusion on the two young Madrigals' faces, she elaborated, "Before the Encanto existed, in that little village that most of us fled from, it was common practice for mating marks to be sort of like an engagement ring. An Alpha would mark their intended Omega, and wait to see if the mark would fade by the end of two weeks. If you thought you might be True Mates, you might use this as a test for it, but it was mostly a formality. It was rare that a complete bond didn't follow the two week grace period, and it was typically because something else interfered, like one of the partners having second thoughts. But the mark from the Alpha of a True Mate pair wouldn't fade, no matter how long you left it alone. In fact, if the partner didn't reciprocate, they would be driven mad within the month. Without the completed bond, the Alpha's mark would drive them too mad to be able to return the mark, and even if it was managed, they would never be the same."

Camilo's breath caught.

A month.

A month, and his Omega might be too insane to even return the bite, let alone be sane enough to understand what was happening to him.

The silence rang heavily over the room, *Señora* Guzman leveling a stare at the teenager, "How long has it been, Camilo? When did you bite your intended?"

Camilo felt as if his head was moving through molasses, "The night I presented. Six weeks ago."

"*Dios mio*, child! If that mark is still there, it needs to be completed!"

"But—" Dolores reached for Camilo's hand and Camilo gripped it like it was his last lifeline, "he sent me away—"

"What?"

Camilo's vision was starting to go black around the edges, and as Dolores' thumb swept soothingly over his own, he realized he was hyperventilating, "he made me promise—"

"No! I do not care what promise he made to you, a True Mate bond cannot be messed with! No one else will fill that void, child. No matter who it is, they were made for you and you for him. Your scents are already mingled, denying the bond is nothing short of torture and insanity for both of you! Go, child, it cannot wait a moment more!"

Camilo felt her words light a fire in his soul, leaping to his feet, "Thank you, *Señora*, I really appreciate this." He turned, racing off toward the door, but stopped before he stepped into the rain, "if I have more questions—"

"You can come by and talk to me anytime, dear, now go!"

Camilo nodded and sprinted off into the rain, eyes set on the grand house at the top of the hill, thoughts on the stupid, self-sacrificing, *wonderful* man who lived in its walls.

"I'm coming, Bruno. Whatever comes of this, I won't let you get away from me."

Chapter End Notes

I SWEAR I'M WORKING ON IT.

Also, the visualization of Camilo sleeping against the wall can be found here (not my art, not related to the fic itself, I was just inspired by it):

<https://twitter.com/P83510605/status/1491475565484081152?t=0H17G7FXfjFSOpevjIRiEw&s=19>

Chapter 4: Let Me In

Chapter Summary

“Casita, let me in.”

The walls shuddered, shivering and shifting around the teen as Casita settled in her wordless chatter.

“What?!” Camilo turned his head towards one of the other walls, the one making the most noise. He couldn’t read her as well as Mirabel could, but he understood well enough: Casita either couldn’t or *wouldn’t* let Camilo in through the wall.

The room shivered again, and Camilo turned back to the familiar wall in front of him again.

“Then I’ll make my own way through. He needs me, and if you won’t *help* me get through, then I’ll have to do it myself.” He was anxious, nervous, but he was also suddenly *very angry* at both Bruno and Casita for preventing him from helping his Mate. Still, Casita was near and dear to all of them, so as Camilo lifted a slightly shaky hand behind his shoulder in a wind-up, fist clenched, he whispered, “I’m sorry if this hurts you any.”

Chapter Notes

Chapter warnings in the end notes, but this chapter is the most violent I will probably get. The warnings are only posted at the end for the folks who don't mind going in blind, but please take care.

The much anticipated Chapter 4 is here! I'm really excited for this one, I've been looking forward to your reactions for a long time now. Though I have much more in store, this is the first big climactic moment in the series, so buckle up, be ready to cry, but I promise the chapter does make up for it 💕

New tags this chapter: Self-Inflicted Injuries, Angry Sex

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Camilo practically crashed into his room, letting the door slam behind him as he raced toward the wall he'd woken up next to yet again that morning. He could smell Bruno down the hall on the other side, the agave scent overwhelming in its sickly-sweetness, one more indicator of how far gone the Omega was.

"Casita, let me in."

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"Then I'll make my own way through. He needs me, and if you won't *help* me get through, then I'll have to do it myself." He was anxious, nervous, but he was also suddenly *very angry* at both Bruno and Casita for preventing him from helping his Mate. Still, Casita was near and dear to all of them, so as Camilo lifted a slightly shaky hand behind his shoulder in a wind-up, fist clenched, he whispered, "I'm sorry if this hurts you any."

Not waiting for an answer, he straightened, reeled, and leaned into the follow-through as he punched the wall with purpose and force.

It hurt like hell, and he smelled the spike in Bruno's scent as the sound must have reached the trapped Omega, but he couldn't let up now. Camilo reeled back again, ignoring how Casita went silent, how the house stayed deadly still beneath Camilo's repeated strikes, how the only other movement was the steadily increasing denting and crumbling of plaster. He ignored how blood began to trickle and then flow openly from his knuckles, staining the wall and the materials that made it up.

It wasn't until he'd made it partway into the brick and exposed an area a little larger than the front end of his fist that he stopped, and it was only because his hand had finally broken.

Limp and screaming at his brain in pain, Camilo's hand dropped down to his side, dripping a slow trickle of blood onto the floor, while the other hand lifted up behind him to continue where the first had left off. This time, accompanied by a cacophony of Casita's chatter, no doubt worrying over Camilo hurting himself so much.

It must have been hours since he'd started before Camilo's second wrist finally snapped like the first one, and he was left panting and staring at the worn-down hole in the brick. Bruno's scent was on the other side, stationary as it had been since the older man had finally stopped pacing along the hallway. The brick was worn, but Camilo could not see to the other side, and he was very much in need of Julieta's food.

Unsatisfied, in pain, chest feeling like a mess of spikes and needles, Camilo called through the wall, “I’ll get to you, *Tío* Bruno. This has gone on too long and I can’t lose you, not now. I know I promised, but if it means keeping you sane and alive, I will break that promise.”

Bruno didn’t answer, his scent a complicated mix of elation, shock, sorrow, and guilt, but Camilo could do no more than lean his head against the wall, drinking it in. “I’m going to get my hands healed, but in place of my broken promise, take a new one. I promise you I will fix this. I pray one day I’ll be forgiven.” *I pray one day that I’ll be able to forgive myself for leaving you alone like this for so long—too long.*

Camilo walked toward the door, leaving Bruno on the other side of the wall again, ignoring the heavy weight of guilt on his heart as he abandoned his Mate *again*, but he needed healing.

Casita practically threw the door open as Camilo reached it, but instead of letting him step out, he found his ruana grabbed and himself dragged bodily down the hallway to an alcove away from prying eyes and ears. Dolores wasn’t looking at him, but her movements were stiff, panicked and deliberate. For a moment he was confused why his sister didn’t just push him back into his room, but when she shoved him into the emergency pantry at the end of the hall and reached for a jar on a particular shelf, he understood.

Dolores shoved a piece of the bocadillo into his mouth without a word, staring Camilo down as he chewed the confection slowly and swallowed. True to all of *Tía* Julieta’s cooking, he could feel sensation returning to his arms from the elbows towards his fingers, bones mending and setting back into place as his flesh knitted back together.

“I can’t get to him.” Camilo stared down at his mending hands, eyes focused somewhere between them and the floor.

“How did you reach him before? When he was in heat?” Dolores’ voice, whisper-quiet yet loud in the tiny, enclosed space, was patient and calm. Yet as her hand gripped Camilo’s arm, he felt her tremble with emotion.

“I don’t—” Camilo had to take a deep, shaky breath, “I don’t remember. I just remember chasing him and then being in some kind of pit when we mated. The ‘getting there’ is all blurry and distant.”

“And Casita—”

“Won’t budge.”

Dolores went silent, the pantry filling with the harsh sound of Camilo’s breathing.

“Then you’ll have to keep trying. But *hermano*?”

“Hm?”

“Next time, please use tools *besides* your hands.”

Camilo let out a self-deprecating chuckle at that, his eyes lifting to meet Dolores’. “You got it, *hermana*.”

The call for dinner sounded, and the siblings took matching deep breaths to prepare to face the rest of the family. Camilo would return to his task as soon as he'd made sure to avert any suspicion about his behavior. He couldn't risk the family interfering before the bond was completed.

Armed with a hammer and screwdriver, squirreled away under his ruana on the way back to his room, Camilo went after the dent in his wall with renewed vigor.

For the few hours his body would let him, Camilo chiseled out chunks of brick and bamboo beneath a plaster coating, letting the dusty debris fall to the floor and coat his clothes. The extra laundry would be worth it if he could just *get to Bruno*.

Which was why when Camilo awoke the next day, slumped against the wall again, he was coated in a layer of brick dust and his ass was numb from sitting both on the floor and on the handle of the hammer.

Bruno's scent was just on the other side again, a little stronger for having a small gap to pass through the wall, and Camilo just pressed against the wall a little more as he awoke. Deeply inhaling the addictive scent of his Omega, Camilo felt a low rumbling in his chest at the peaceful atmosphere, at least until they both stood and separated again.

Camilo kept the set of clothes he'd begun his demolition in separate from the rest of his wardrobe, reusing them whenever he had enough free time to come back and chip away more at the wall. Doing it between babysitting duties in the village was hard on his body, but the hope of seeing Bruno again and completing their bond kept him going, even as it felt like the wall went on forever—

It took a few days for Camilo to really notice, but every time he made a full tunnel through the wall, the next time he had to leave and come back, it was covered again. All the tiny little holes he'd dug through were filled in, keeping Camilo from making any real headway.

He growled and went at it harder in response, digging larger divots into the wall and trying to knock out larger holes, but the cycle continued.

At first, he thought it might be Casita filling in the holes and keeping them apart, preventing Camilo's intrusion, but then he woke up an hour earlier than usual. Something about the scent in his room felt off.

"*Tío?*" Bruno's scent was right there, but it was muted, metallic, like it was when Bruno wandered the whole house and stopped for long periods of time.

The sound of metal scraping against brick entered Camilo's ears, a soft squish like something being spread, and the teen shot to his feet, eyes wide as his eyes took in the truth with disbelief.

A glint of metal shone briefly through the latest hole he'd made, smooth but rusty, and just below it the edges of Bruno's flesh—pale from his confinement except the angry red of the bond mark—and then it was covered with a kind of gray putty that filled in the gap and slowly transformed into more brick.

“What?” Casita clattered next to him, setting off the kind of chime that was one of her only unnatural sounds for a specific word: magic.

Bruno was filling in the gaps that Camilo made, and the magic of the house was turning it into more of Casita’s wall. Based on how long it had taken Camilo to break through each time, it had been happening since he’d first breached through to the other side.

Camilo growled, deep and low in his chest, and threw himself at the dented, chiseled wall of his room with his full body. Despite all of his work, he did little more than hurt himself and shake loose some of the dust and chips that were simply waiting to fall.

“*Tío!* You can’t do this! It’s not healthy!” There was no answer, the metallic overtone of Bruno’s scent as strong as ever, even as Bruno didn’t move from just beyond the wall.

Later that morning, Dolores found Camilo covered in more blood, his arms limp again and his forehead covered in bruises and a few cuts. She shoved two pieces of bocadillo into his mouth this time, to make sure he was fully healed, and then brought him to her room, where she held Camilo against her chest and let him sob and cry into her shirt until he lost his voice.

Camilo never gave up, but his efforts re-focused. Instead of making a hole to widen, he’d widen the divot. Shaping it to be big enough for him to fit through, he only made holes all the way through to keep Bruno from suspecting what he was doing. By the time he felt it was big enough, it had been almost two weeks since Camilo had met with *Señora* Guzman, almost two months since Camilo’s presentation.

Bruno’s scent had warmed, the alcohol scent mellowing in its sharpness but becoming stronger, and Camilo could tell that the man was trying to be as close to the teen as possible at all times now. Bruno’s heat was approaching, and it was calling on both of them more strongly than either of the times before.

It took all of Camilo’s concentration to stay focused on everyday conversations and tasks, his mind too busy trying to find Bruno. He’d given up on using tools, banging himself repeatedly at the dent in the wall, now larger than his body, to try and break through the last layer. Yet it left him only bruised and bleeding, Casita practically shoving Dolores at him with a piece of the healing confection in hand each night.

They’d nearly run out of bocadillo by now, and Dolores had to be the one to bring it up to *Tía* Julieta as well as come up with an excuse, since Camilo was too distracted to do much more than nod and agree to vaguely heard statements. If any of the rest of the family noticed or said anything, Camilo didn’t notice.

Finally, in a burst of anger at his entire situation, a surge of protectiveness over his Omega’s health, and a wave of teenage hormones, Camilo felt his rut hit him before Bruno’s heat could start.

The arousal was almost overpowering, but Camilo’s anger simmered just beneath the surface. He needed to get to his mate. Now. Promise or no promise.

Stalking to his room from the kitchen, Bruno's scent in his nose, ignoring the flinches and questions of his family as he passed them by, Camilo had only just enough presence of mind to slam his door shut behind him before he used all of his Alpha strength to charge down the damaged wall, breaking through into the dusty, decrepit halls of the wall's interior.

Camilo's nostrils flared as he sought out the scent of his mate, his gait steady but his footfalls loud and strong against the floorboards. His legs deftly carried him over the pit with the casual grace of an Alpha on a mission, his eyes not straying from the continuing segment of hallway Camilo had not yet explored.

It was one of the few times Bruno hadn't gravitated towards Camilo as he moved around the house, Bruno's scent remaining exactly where Camilo had last sensed it: behind the kitchen wall. A flimsy door barred his way, but a simple shove sent it crashing aside.

A yelp sounded from somewhere in the middle of the room, and Camilo's gaze zeroed in on Bruno seated heavily in an old plush armchair, the furniture fraying at every edge. Bruno's face was flushed with fever, his gaze unfocused even as he turned to look at Camilo, pupils blown wide and scent burning sweetly down Camilo's nostrils and throat.

The Alpha continued to growl, no longer able to hold back any of his anger or arousal. He stalked over to his *Tío*, his pants so tight around his engorged dick that it hurt to walk, and placed his hands on the arms of the chair, pinning Bruno in place.

"I won't let you do this anymore, *Tío*. I can't let you hurt yourself over something like this, not when we've just found each other." Camilo moved his arms only long enough to grab Bruno's shins and fold the man nearly in half, replacing his arms beneath Bruno's knees. Bruno leaned into the motion, his arms reaching to grip the ends of the armchair arms around his folded limbs.

"Alpha..." Bruno whispers in reply, and Camilo knows he's too far gone like this to be able to respond properly. Nothing for it, then, he has to get Bruno into a clearer minded state or this would be an endless cycle.

Growling again in frustration, Camilo yanked Bruno's pants and underwear off of the man's person, fingers coming away wet at the contact with the soaked garments. The slick made it a little difficult to fumble with his belt and shove his own pants down, but Camilo managed, resisting a groan at the slippery contact of his hand with his dick.

Taking just enough time to aim himself properly, Camilo plunged into the dripping, clenching hole of his Omega, growling in relief and pleasure as his eyes rolled back into his head.

He wasted no time thrusting into his groaning *Tío*, teeth seeking the mark on the side of his mate's neck as he chased his first orgasm. Camilo knew he was being more rough than before, his thighs stinging as they slapped into Bruno's asscheeks, but he couldn't help it. He was horny, he was angry, he was desperate to make his Omega return the bond, and all he could do was fuck into the warm, slick hole before him and sob into the mark his teeth were clenching.

Camilo's knot started to form, his arousal mixing with his anger and desperation to slam into the Omega at break-neck speed. One final plunge had Camilo tied in place, Bruno spilling all over himself in response, the older man hunched over and folded in half, trapped beneath his nephew and unable to get away. Camilo released Bruno's neck and leaned back to watch clarity return to the man's eyes, to watch the guilt return once more.

"Bruno, please. I need you to listen to me this time." Camilo swallowed around a sob, his face surely a mess beneath the tears and spit and traces of Bruno's blood, "I can't let you do this to yourself."

"Camilo! I told you—"

"*I know* what you told me, *Tío*, but I'm here anyway. Because even if it means breaking a promise, I can't lose you."

Bruno seemed to take in the image before him, Camilo shuddering and sobbing even as his dick pumped Bruno full, and pressed his lips together in a sign of obedience.

"I talked to someone else with a True Mate, Bruno." Hearing them called that made Bruno flinch, but just seeing that he didn't dispute it told Camilo all he needed to know; Bruno knew that's what they were, too, and he wasn't going to fight him on it. Emboldened, Camilo reached for his *Tío's* face, concern dripping from his eyes, voice, and touch. "She says it's permanent, and that if we don't complete the bond ... " Bruno closed his eyes, but whether to avoid Camilo's gaze or his word's, he didn't know. "It'll be really bad. *Really* bad."

Bruno gave a minute but stern shake of his head. "It's not your responsibility to fix this for me. I'm the adult here, *sobrino*."

The anger flared back up in Camilo's chest. He shook Bruno by the chin, forcing his eyes back open to look at him. "*I know* you think I'm too young, but do you not understand what I'm saying? It's *permanent*, *tio*, not *semi-permanent*. Okay? This isn't *Mami's* hair dye, I don't get to change my mind later—"

Strength returning, Bruno yanked Camilo's hand off his face, but didn't let go of it. "That is exactly what I mean! The damage is already done for me, but it doesn't—" Bruno cut off as his eyes fluttered shut for a moment, a small sound bubbling up as he adjusted his hips. When he looked back up at Camilo, his eyes rolled down from the back of his head to focus on him. "It doesn't have to be you, too, 'Milo. I can carry this for us by myself and you can be with ... someone else."

Even without a completed bond, Camilo could tell how much the thought hurt him. Camilo shook his head, face tight. "There isn't anyone else. That's what I'm trying to tell you, there is only you and me, so if you keep doing this, then I'll *never* get to know my mate."

"You don't know it's only me."

"No one else will appeal to me, Bruno."

"There could be someone else."

"Don't run from me anymore-"

"*Anyone* else, I can't-"

"You know I'll keep coming. You can feel that, right? You can feel me in your head?"

"I can't take your life away from you, mi vi- Alph- *sobrino*..!"

"Whether or not the bond is completed, we're it for each other." For the first time, Bruno didn't have a rebuttal. He stared into the darkness off to one side with such a complex expression, Camilo didn't know what to label it. Grief? Resignation? Anger? Defiance? But something in the back of his mind that felt a lot like the way Bruno smelled told him it was self hatred.

"Mark me," Camilo whispered. He squeezed Bruno's hand in his and watched a slow trickle of tears flow down Bruno's cheeks. "Please, please mark me, *Tío*. If you go insane on the other side of this, if you don't connect with me, then my life won't be worth living." Again, Bruno closed his eyes. The shapeshifter watched him take a deep breath, and for the first time, it really felt like Bruno was listening. "I won't be able to live without you."

It was the final nail in the coffin of Bruno's resolve.

Bruno sobbed, the tears falling quickly now, streaming down his cheeks as he reached his hands up to pull Camilo down, "*Dios Mio*. God forgive me for my sins." He took a deep breath in Camilo's ear, and then—

It didn't feel painful. Instead, the slide of Bruno's teeth into Camilo's scent gland felt like a piece of his soul sliding home into his chest. The feeling was so overwhelming, so all-encompassing, that Camilo came two more times in quick succession without his knot dying down at all.

An answering pulse in Camilo's chest told him that Bruno had come around the Alpha as well, but his consciousness wasn't picking up any physical feedback. It was like they were just two balls of light, tangled together on an entirely different plane of existence.

Bruno's emotions flooded Camilo's consciousness, thoughts of guilt lacing every ecstatic burst of color. Guilt, but no regret. Warmth, love, a soft blanket of Bruno's cherishing touch, protecting Camilo from the swirling vortex of green sand that was the outside world.

Sharp grains that felt like every accusation the world had thrown at Bruno for his existence whipped around them, and Camilo could feel every tiny scrape and scar they left on his *Tío*'s consciousness. Yet as their spirits merged, they remained untouched. Like their light was a barrier keeping them unharmed.

As Camilo opened his eyes again, he realized that the sand was real. Bruno's eyes were shining brightly, the sand circling them like it had that very first time, but this time Camilo could feel what Bruno was feeling.

He could feel the joy, the love, the apprehension, could see the flashes of imagery that didn't quite form in the grains: Bruno, glowing and heavy with child, three children with full heads of curly hair crawling all over an older Bruno and Camilo, a brief image of what looked like the whole family crowded in together for a photo, thrown into each other by Casita's floor tiles—

Then Bruno started to blink, the visions fading and his eyes dimming as the sand died down around them, piling onto the floor. Camilo panted as he and Bruno stared into each other's eyes, the green glow fading away as the teen watched.

"You—" Bruno started, swallowing when his voice came out dry and stiff, "your eyes—"

Concerned, Camilo squinted at his uncle, "what about them?"

Bruno stared back in an awe that Camilo could *feel*, could practically crane his neck to look at as it felt like a towering wall standing before him, "they were glowing, Camilo. Just like mine."

Camilo's eyes widened.

Glowing? Like Bruno's? Now that he was looking for it, there was a fading orange glow following his gaze as he looked around the room. His eyes did that? That was so cool!

Camilo turned back to Bruno, grinning and hiccuping slightly as he tried to speak faster than his mouth could manage. "DJHHYOU SEE THAT? THAT WAS SO COOL, I'VE NEVER DONE THAT BEFORE!" And then, quieter with a dawning realization, "Do you think I could do it again? I don't even know how I'd try, we'd have to figure something."

Bruno's slack-jawed expression started to gain some color as he hurried to nod along to Camilo's words. "I- Uh, Ye- Yeah, yeah, I saw it." Bruno stammered slightly, "Yeah, Alpha, I did."

Camilo jumped on the offer, leaning in close enough their chests touched. "How do you get it to happen? Yours do it, right?"

A litany of emotions crashed against each other along the pathway of their bond, Camilo's excitement suffusing Bruno's inability to process what he had seen. Disbelief colored by enthusiasm cut by worry but undercut by a zealous energy to succeed- Before Bruno even knew it, he was laughing and covering his eyes with one hand. Camilo's happiness had won. "It happens when I use my magic."

An answering chuckle from Camilo turned into a giggle, and soon he found himself breaking into laughter as well. He felt a pulse along their bond, joy and awe and affection rebounding back and forth between them.

The laughter intensified, Camilo collapsing onto Bruno in the chair in the fit, feeling his chest bounce with Bruno's laughter as they held each other close and basked in their joy.

After a few moments, Camilo turned his face to Bruno's, now nose to nose, and asked, "Do you want to try again?"

"The eyes, or...?" Bruno flicked his gaze downward in suggestion.

Camilo just grinned and didn't answer.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter warnings: self-inflicted injuries: broken bones described vaguely in an important segment of the story. Below will be listed the starting and ending of the section along with a brief description of what happened in between.

This space is here to keep folks from spoiling themselves by accident!

Between "It wasn't until he made it partway into the brick" and the paragraph before "Unsatisfied, in pain, chest feeling..." this section describes Camilo physically attempting to take down the wall by hand with Casita trying to 'talk' him out of it and Bruno's scent hovering on the other side.

The paragraph describing Dolores shoving food in Camilo's mouth has a semi-graphic description of the wounds healing.

The first sentence of the paragraph beginning "Later that morning, Dolores found Camilo" contains another description of injuries, similar to the first one.

What a wild ride, huh? This was by far my most anticipated chapter to post, so I hope it satisfied you guys! It might be a while for the next update because I'm writing the next section out of order, but I promise I'm working on it! In the meantime, have a good one!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!